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The Obscure and Attractive Object of Desire and the Unconscious Writing from the Past towards the Future, from the Future towards the Past.

(Arzunun ve Bilinçaltının Karanlık ve Cezbedici Nesnesi: Gelecekten Geçmişe, Geçmişten Geleceğe Doğru Yazmak)

It was Monday morning, 10 past 9 when the hysterical voice on the phone was complaining that I hadn't put my money in my own account but in another account. How could this be? Why I didn't use my own branch in Ortaköy but another branch in another city to deposit my money, which did not make me exactly Rockefeller but which was still significantly more than what I normally had-.

I felt naked. Somebody –my bank account representative- was checking my account day by day, hour by hour and has seen the right in herself to complain and get offended that I put MY money in another branch without asking HER.

This is what the system does. She has access to all my private information, she knows that I am not exactly into bag or shoe shopping but I don't hesitate to spend for a face cream and like the best seats in a good concert. She knows I made a donation to Mor Çatı (a women and children shelter) lately, and she is not hesitant about chasing me for the insurance of my newly bought –second hand- car. Is somebody watching us? Yes, indeed.

Could that somebody be “us”? Yes indeed.

We haven't been able to see the face of my little baby-girl since the last two ultrasound checks. The theory of my doctor is that she is a little football player, one like Beckham perhaps, moving too fast... My theory is simpler; she doesn't like to be bothered by us through that ultrasound machine in her quiet, peaceful little home.

Speaking of my baby girl to be born, hopefully- I would like to speak a bit of faith versus coincidence. Even now, being sceptical about a thing called “faith”, I said “hopefully”, which definitely bears some religious – let's say- elements so it is obvious that this brainstorming will not take us too far... But still, no harm in asking questions, so here we go:

Can this be a “coincidence” then? My second book “Exile” waited to be published at my publishing house Everest for its take for almost one and a half years; the story that opens and ends the book, “Zobar and Başa”'s woman character Başa is pregnant in the story that ends of the book. Now, when I was writing it, did I feel that the launch of the book and the last months of my pregnancy would coincide? Did I even know then, that I wanted a baby and would decide –of course with my husband- to have one? The story's character Başa is not me, you can say. Definitely not; she's just a character in a story but who can claim that we don't scatter pieces of our existence in our characters?

But more importantly, did I know during this very interesting and challenging, and long adventure –mind you, the “official” number of weeks for pregnancy is 40 weeks, which is 10 months, which is almost a year, which gives me the full right to utter the word “long” -, so, did I know during this period that I would face a situation as the one I wrote in one of my stories in “Exile”; the story called “Number 5”. In this story I talk

about a very advanced scientific program called the “Clean Gene Program”. As you can figure out from the title, with this program you can determine by tests if the baby growing inside you is as healthy as you want her/him to be. Much better than the DNA tests that are conducted in labs today, with this Clean Gene Program, you can be a hundred percent “sure” that your offspring is a perfect sample of a “super being”.

Was I writing “from the past towards the future” when I, myself had to take some DNA tests to see –as much as is possible with today’s science of course- if my own fetus was good enough for birth, at almost the 5th month of my pregnancy? In gynecology, amniocentesis is called an “invasive” action which is correct by its very definition. You go inside the mother’s belly with a loooong needle, punch a hole in the placenta –the silent and peaceful home of the baby- and take some samples from this very private home. Now, if the tests determined some serious DNA defect, what decision would I give? Just like the mom in my story “Number 5”, would I go hysterical and decide to get rid of the baby? Would this make me a considerate mum, or a murderer? Where does faith start, and where does or should science end? And as a writer, where do I stand in this complicated issue? The good thing is, I don’t have to stand anywhere. Lawyers should stand somewhere if they are at the court; clergymen should stand somewhere, hopefully close to “God”; politicians should at least seem to be standing somewhere while I can fly as much as I can; this is the beauty of writing.

In my first book *The Dream Merchants’ Chamber*, there is a –dystopian- story called “A New Race Is Created”/Yeni Bir Irk Yaratıldı that froze even my own blood whilst writing it. Homo sapiens SHTCB-65412 is a high-tech, engineered human being, or a species perhaps, that is created after many years of experimentation. This is a time when mutation is stopped, evolution is totally controlled. Homo sapiens SHTCB-65412 no longer defecates, no longer ages –the stopping age of the heart is fixed to 120 by decree of the government-, the embryo does not grow inside the female body any more but is nicely produced in high-tech baby production centers, of course with the perfect DNA’s. This Homo Sapiens SHTCB-65412 is sturdy and strong, its joints are extremely flexible so that they don’t break any more, its skin is durable, and the head can turn around 360 degrees for further convenience... As for emotional and psychological features, it goes without saying that all kinds of mental disorders have been beautifully fixed, curiosity and the ability of analytical thinking have been removed from the human genome, and emotions of constant satisfaction and gratitude have been ejected–I guess a lot of politicians would love this project.

Of course there are a lot of scientific researches going on whose results are not always achieved that innocently. In *The Dream Merchants’ Chamber*, the story “A New Race Is Created” comes after the story “We Want Your Organs”/ “Organlarınızı İstiyoruz”. In this story the government conducts secret experiments among first the volunteers, and when they run out of volunteers, among the people they entrap. They collect live organs from live human beings to reach the perfect DNA. Now, who can say this will never happen, or even that it is not happening already?

When I watch documentaries on Discovery Channel about how science progresses, I hate our kind once again. Who gives us the right to lock those poor animals in cages – rats, rabbits, monkeys...God knows who or what else. Of course when it comes to picking fruits of such savagery, such as running DNA tests, depending on science to bring my best friend back to life after a deadly accident, or even taking simple medicine when I catch a cold, do I think of these poor animals? I don’t, but still I ease my conscience when I write about them and discomfort my readers, such as my story in “Sai Bo Gu Ji Man Gwn Chan A”;

the title of a movie by Park Chan-Wook which means “I Am A Robot But It’s Okey”. In this story without any comments or additions, I have put various sentences one after the other that I cut from different newspapers. I would like to read from it a bit:

“Herman the bull, the first domestic animal to carry human genes was put to sleep because of an arthritis attack. A gene of Herman was replaced with a human gene while he was yet an embryo. The aim was to make the milk of Herman’s progeny contain human protein. Human protein was found in the milk of the progeny but it was understood that the amount of this protein was negligibly small.

American researchers constructed the gene map of a laboratory rat of the species “*rattus norvegicus*.” Regarding the construction of the gene map of laboratory rats, the third mammal the gene map of which has been constructed after the human being and rats, Kerstin Lindblad, genetic engineer from the Whitehead Institute said, “this is very significant with regard to a better understanding of human physiology and pathology.”

The research concerning the production of animate beings containing computer chips (Cyborgs), carried out in the USA Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has neared completion. The spy moths that grow with microchips inserted into them while still in cocoon can be remote controlled and oriented at the desired direction. With the help of the spy moths thus produced it will be possible, for instance, to hunt down terrorists in the deserted mountains in the north of Pakistan. Scientists have enabled moths to grow with the microchips inserted into them while still in cocoon. The Pentagon is pleased with the research. Rod Brooks, head of the MIT Computer Sciences and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory said “Animate robot researches are cheaper than the production of nuclear weapons. Moths eat very little and can fly everywhere. We had carried out similar researches on rats and cockroaches in the past but the growing of a butterfly with a chip in it has been achieved for the first time.”

Top 3 in design: Labradoodle, Puggle, Maltapoo. These dogs that are bred through the cross-mating of Labradors and standard Poodles can command a price of up to 2 thousand 500 dollars. The Labrador’s qualities of conformity and as guide-dog have been brought together with the Poodle’s antiallergenic coat that does not lose its hair. This species was bred 30 years ago in Australia for the first time. The most popular dog design, however, is Puggle, the crossbreed of the Beagle and the Pug. Due to its small body it is suitable for keeping in flats. It was created by decreasing the Pug’s bulging eyes and the Beagle’s instinct of running. Maltapoo, on the other hand, is Jessica Simpson’s choice too. These dogs unite the responsible character of the Poodle and the playful and gentle character of the Maltese. Not all dogs are designer dogs however; beware of fake designs. For a dog to be called “designer,” it must be created through the crossbreeding of the genetically most healthy and strongest, and also the most amiable members of two different pure breeds. The genes that carry genetic diseases or undesired character streaks are eliminated before mating. Combining the best ones, the perfect dog is created.”

So the story goes on but I will stop here just to say, though I simply adore our two Labradors, at least I had learnt now that should want another dog, we simply will go and get one from the dog shelters where thousands of poor “design dogs” bought and abandoned, are waiting to find a warm home.

Ok, enough for such dark subjects... Let’s jump to another form of art; movies! Luis Buñuel, in his movie “The Obscure Object of Desire/Arzunun Şu Karanlık Nesnesi” tells the story of an aging Frenchman who falls in love with a young woman who repeatedly frustrates his romantic and sexual desires; of course in his own fascinating, surrealistic way where he takes us to the dark side of the conscious as he always does... He plays with our minds particularly with the leading lady character of the movie, Conchita. Conchita is played by two separate actresses in the movie. They each appear unpredictably in separate scenes and differ not

only physically, but also temperamentally, adding dimension and mystery to the character and the story. Just like our own complicated selves in real life, like a Jekyll and Hyde, perhaps, a gentleman versus a cave man; superego versus the animal inside us.

Writing, for sure is another “obscure object of desire”; so obscure that we never now when we write, how much is fed from the past, or from that black hole or dimension that we call “the subconscious”; we become our own Jekyll and Hyde in each page. How much do we write from the future –our visions, our dreams, our intuitions...? Do writers feel the future more than, say, butchers? But tell me, how much of our books can we claim are all our original thoughts?

What could be the tie that bonds a legendary book like *1984* by George Orwell and that –a less legendary one- by Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead*? *1984* was written between 1947-48; *The Fountainhead* around 1943. One is a landmark of British dystopian books, the other is considered to be a praise of “individualism”. But, “The Party” of *1984* who creates people of “one kind” is right there in *The Fountainhead* disguised sometimes as an ordinary architect (Peter Keating) who designs buildings that serve ordinary public taste, or a critic of architecture (Ellsworth Toohey) who tries to put down an extraordinary architect (Howard Roark, the leading character of the book) for his groundbreaking and –thus scary- ideas and works. And could the “Big Brother” who manipulates or “re-creates” history through meticulously edited newspapers be disguised as a media tycoon who can manipulate masses with simple but emotional articles in *The Fountainhead*? Why not.

I need to mention quickly by the way that though I am not proud of it at all, when I wrote “A New Race Is Created” to go into my first book, I had not even read *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley (written in 1931). How can one explain some of the similarities between my “content” new race and Huxley’s “happy people”? And where does Yevgeniy İvanoviç Zamyatin (1884-1937) stand here with his book “My”/We (that he wrote in 1920)?

You see where connections take us? We started here in İstanbul, traveled to Spain, then to Britain, to the United States of America and then to Russia...and we are back in İstanbul. And I still don’t have an answer to any of the questions that I have been posing for the last half an hour. And to me, that is the beauty of writing.